

TRANSCRIPT—GEORGE GIBSON

Interviewees: George Gibson and Olivia Gibson Metz

Interviewer: Sharon Fahrer

Interview Date: April 9, 2022

Location: Kitchen of George Gibson's home on 121 Thurland Ave.

Length: 1 digital recording; 00:49:19

Transcriber: Cynthia Barrager and Hannah Helmey

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Abstract: George Gibson (born 1928) described his memories of growing up on Thurland Avenue in the predominantly African American, South Asheville (Black Kenilworth) neighborhood. Topics include education, work, community life, stores, and interactions between Black and white residents in the area. Olivia Gibson Metz, George's daughter, was also present and contributed to the interview.

Sharon Fahrer: Okay. Well, here we are on April 9th, and my name is Sharon Fahrer and we're interviewing Mr. George Gibson. Mr. Gibson, can you tell us your birthday and where you live?

George Gibson: My name is George Gibson. Lived at number 8 Thurland Avenue when I was born. Now I live at 121 Thurland. Birthday, Mom said the fifth month, nineteenth day, twenty-eighth year.

Olivia Gibson Metz: [chuckles]

SF: Okay. And what was your mother's name?

GG: Mom name was Cora Ingram Gibson.

SF: What's the middle?

OM: Cora Lee.

SF: Cora Lee?

GG: Lee, yeah.

OM: L.E.E.

SF: And then what was--?

OM. Ingram. I. N. G. R. A. M.

SF: Okay. And where was she from?

GG: She was born right below Augusta, Georgia in a little town they called Meyers Mill, South Carolina.

SF: Okay. And—I get panicky when I don't see it-(the recording window) -and what about your dad? What was his name and where was he born?

GG: My dad was named John Henry Gibson. He was from Harlem, Georgia.

SF: So, how--? What brought them to Asheville?

GG: Earlier years when--my dad, he said he cut punk wood for most of the year. Then he met my mom there by cutting pulp wood in different places.

SF: In South Carolina.

GG: In South Carolina. Later, they moved here to Asheville to live here. And my dad was the caretaker of this whole area which is called Beaucatcher Mountain--which at that time was owned by William, Dr. William Dunn--which is now called Beaucatcher Heights.

SF: So, what would it mean to be a caretaker? Like, what kind of things would he have to do?

GG: Well, he did from here over to the reservoir, you might know, back over by the cemetery. He had the job of cleaning all dead bushes out. As the limb died or whatnot, he would gather those...and he had a place to burn them and he kept this whole place clean. You had paths everywhere from here, back up to Beaucatcher Mountain, which Dr. Dunn lived.

SF: So, was it basically a big estate?

GG: Oh. Well, it extended, I'd say from—where, baby?

SF: I mean, was he the only man that lived in all this property?

GG: No, no, no. He had two sons. Dr. Dunn had two sons. Tom Dunn and William Junior.

SF: And where did your--? So, you lived here on Thurland. So that was just outside of his property?

GG: No, that was on his property.

SF: That was on his property.

GG: We didn't have to pay any rent or whatnot. He kept us up.

OM: The number 8 Thurland was, even now, where Thurland comes from Forest Hill Drive into Keebler. The new house is on that short end of Thurland, behind those houses, is where they lived.

SF: So, was it--? So, it was his property? But was there more of a community here than just your family, more of an African American community here at that time?

[pause]

OM: Yeah, Dad, wasn't it? From where you all lived, all across, over toward the church over to Kenilworth.

GG: Oh, yeah.

OM: Where the school and everything was. That's what she wants to know.

GG: In south Asheville and Kenilworth was a community, even though the whites lived in Kenilworth, the Blacks lived in what they called South Asheville. But there was no difference. Because we all worshiped together.

SF: But you went to a separate school?

GG: Yes, when I was young that way, before I was able to go to school, at six years old, a few months before I was to go to school, I was hit with appendicitis. And then when Dr. Dunn said to my daddy that time, that's when Mission Hospital was on Woodfin Street.

OM: [chuckles]

GG: Okay. And he told my dad, now tell the doctor, if money will save him, save him. And the doctor did. The next year I went to South Asheville School being seven years old instead of six. And that's where I went to school, in South Asheville School.

SF: And how long did you go there 'til.

GG: That school from the first to the seventh grade.

SF: And what was that school like? How many teachers were there?

GG: They had four teachers, four rooms. Had first grade teacher, second-grade teacher had two. Then the fifth and sixth had two. And then the seventh grade had one.

SF: So how many kids would you say went there?

GG: Oh, they had kids from Elk Mountain, Beaver Dam, Haw Creek, Chunns Cove, Swannanoa, Black Mountain. Even from out there near Canton. What is that?

SF: Candler?

GG: No, Canton.

OM: Waynesville.

GG: Yeah, Waynesville. Had kids come in from Waynesville. And Canton. They was bussed in.

SF: Wow. So, after you went to school there, where'd you go?

GG: I went one year to Asheland Middle School. It was on Asheland Avenue there where the doctor buildings are now, that's where the school set. There was eighth grade middle school. After eighth year, then I went to Stephens-Lee, nine through twelfth year.

It was there in '47 is when our house burned. I had to quit school and went to work.

Cutting grass in Kenilworth and washing windows and so forth. But the next year I went back to school, to finish school. And I finished the twelfth grade. And I talked with the

principal. I think it was April or May. And he said if I had come to him and he knew the story, my grade was A, that I could have went with my class. But I'm happy that I didn't.

SF: [laughs] Why?

GG : Because that's where I met my wife.

[All laugh]

SF: What part of Asheville did she live in?

GG: She lived on Hill Street.

SF: So, you didn't know her before you went to high school?

GG: I knew her all the time, I'd just never say nothing. [Laughs] Yeah, we went to school all together. She was there at Asheville High School--I mean Middle School, and then we went to Stephens-Lee together.

SF: Who has the principal when you were at Stephens-Lee?

GG: What was his name? ... Tolliver? Yeah, Tolliver. I can't think of his name ... but Tolliver.

SF: So...

GG: And my greatest teachers were Mrs. L.P. Burton, which was my core teacher, and Mrs. Ruth Carolina, my English teacher, which could tell you how to find anything you want concerning the parts of speech, the verbs, different parts of speech.

SF: [chuckles] The teachers at Stephens-Lee had better education than the white teachers, they all had degrees from Columbia and University of Michigan.

GG: Right.

SF: So, when you were growing up, how much interaction did you have with the rest of Asheville? White people and Black people. Did you go downtown?

GG: Well, at that time, at that time, we weren't permitted here in Kenilworth, South Asheville, to run through town. So it was... I think I might've been about sixteen when Kenilworth and South Asheville preachers decided they were going to start a program for the kids on their summer vacation wouldn't just be running around in the streets. And they came together and every Monday through Friday from nine to one, they came together right down here--we call it the Flat, but it's the city playground now at Kenilworth Park. And at that time they would teach us what we should do, what we shouldn't do, how we should interact together, and I remember vividly that when the summer vacation was over and Mrs. Gresham--she was the spokesperson for the Presbyterian Church--she would come and we all got degrees and naming the books of the Bible, the different minor and major properties and whatnot. And she asked us on that Friday night, she said, "Do you understand, young folk, what we was teaching you?" and we said, "Yes ma'am," and she bust our bubbles. [all laughing] She said, "No you don't. But if you just remember what we told you, you'll understand it after a while," and I've learned.

SF: So, what was it?

GG: The teachers--what they told us, what we should do, what we shouldn't do, how we should live, how we should interact with each other.

SF: So, what were you supposed to be doing? What you should do?

GG: Well, you know, I guess we supposed to have been more connected as friends rather than enemies. Now I realize here in Kenilworth, with the whites--it wasn't perfect. But there were so many good ones, the bad had to accept it. So, we always accepted.

SF: So, did you have any white kids that you played with when you were in the park?

GG: With everybody, white and Black () vacation for summer--vacation when we was out of public school. It wasn't until I really got to Stephens Lee that I learned the difference. That people were different--ideas and different way of doing things. Because when I first go to town, there on the square, you probably know where () where they had Black, and they had white...

SF: ...Bathrooms?

GG: Bathrooms.

OGM: Colored.

SF: Yeah.

GG: No, no. They had white bathrooms and water fountains. If we wanted to go to the bathroom on the square, we had to go back down to Eagle Street and find a bathroom down there. We wasn't allowed to go in there. And that way we learned that different people had different thoughts about life.

SF: Did you go to the YMI?

GG: Yeah, yup, we went to the YMI there on Market Street.

SF: So, what kind of stuff did you do at the YMI?

GG: Well, they had a pool hall, they had dance groups, all the activities that we had, that the Black had. The white was not involved in that.

SF: Right. What about the library? Did you use the library at the YMI?

GG: Yeah, the library was still there.

SF: So, what about people from other communities, like the Southside or Montford? Did you do things with them?

GG: Oh, yes. I met those in high school. From Southside, Hill's Creek, Montford, East End--they all came to the same high school, Stephens-Lee.

SF: Yeah.

GG: But we all--but I had learned enough from my mom telling us, 'cause Pop died when I was 8 year--I was born in '28. My dad died in '38. And that's when Mom took over, and they asked her, "Are you gonna get married again?" and she said, "No. I'm not gonna have no man beating my kids." In my family there was 12 siblings: Columbus, Addie, Arthur, Bessie, Matthew, George--which is me--James, and Benjamin.

SF: Wow, that's a lot to remember just there. And then what happened when they got married and then they had kids? That's a lot more people to remember.

GG: Oh, yeah. I remember my mom would () and that's why I said at the end of the year, as I wrote, I'm still learning, as Mrs. Gresham said, you don't understand everything now. But if you keep doing what we ask you and what we told you to do, you'll understand it better after a while. And every day I'm learning more and more.

SF: That's the spirit. So, what did your mother do to support the family?

GG: After Pop died, Mama would always--she did laundry. She would take in ironing and washing. She would get some day work. At that time, we was old enough to go around and cut grass, and wash windows, and rake leaves and so forth for the community. But she never did, I never remember her taking--asking us for one penny. She had always said, "When you work, you save some and you spend some." And that was her philosophy of life. And that's what I tried to do for my kids. I never asked my kids for anything. I did what I was supposed to have done--given them a chance for life. And I had five kids that went through college. I've had three brothers in service in the United States Army. But yet, we made it.

SF: Well, that must have been tough for your mother to support you doing laundry, all those kids.

GG: Well, we had a home garden, we had cows, and we had chickens and whatnot. And we made it.

SF: How do you feel about all these houses that are built?

GG: Oh, boy...

SF: On your land where your cows used to be.

GG: Nothing you can do about it. I just sit here and say, "Lord, you know. Lord, you know." I don't know, seems like they are trying to get us put out, but they're all good neighbors. I haven't had one yet that I think was just bad bad.

SF: Well, I'm sure you're a good neighbor to them, too. So, you know, that's a reward, too. What about if you had to go to the store? Were there some stores here, that you could--if your mom needed groceries or something?

GG: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. The A&P right there where 45 Biltmore Avenue is. Used to be an A&P, and a Winn Dixie, and an OK Store. My dad, before he passed, he would always work at this store. He'd clean the meat room and... putting groceries out. And on Saturday night--it wasn't like it is now. Anything that was left on the counter--watermelon, cantaloupe, bananas, or peaches--which, we had good peaches then--anything that wouldn't have been kept 'til Monday, he got it. So, we fed the whole community. Because on Saturday night he would call us, and we'd all have to go over there. We had a little red wagon, and we'd load that thing up. And the same with me, when I grew up. I fed the community. Because when they had the () Store, I did the same thing. I'd go--I worked all my life, and I would go out there on Wednesdays and Saturday, clean the cutting room, where they had sawdust on the floor, the cutting blocks and knives and pots and pans on Saturday night, all that went to me, so I fed the community from that.

SF: So, how many people--when you say the community, how many families were here in South Asheville?

GG: Let's see, on Thurland Road...

SF: You can say their names out loud...

GG: I'm trying to...

OM: ...names of some families.

GG: Okay, they had a little store right there. Joe Lance, he had a little store right there by the firehouse on Thurland. He had a little store so, Joe Lance, he lived in a house () ... Eddie Brewer, Nellie Gray and her daughter...the next was, what was--oh yeah, Daisy was Ella Jean's sister, so they lived just out from Thurland Ave. Then there was the Pattons, the Hardees, Muckelvenes, Nesbitts, Keeblers... Seems--

SF: So, there was quite a few families.

GG: Oh yeah, they're all through here, and way up on the hill there, that is where the lady lived. She was a Clayton, and she and her brother had divided this land up right after he died. And of course, now there lives Linda Cromwell.

SF: So, what happened after Dr. Dunn died? After your dad didn't work for him anymore?

GG: At that time, it wasn't too long before my Dad died.

SF: So, what happened to his land, I guess is what I'm asking.

GG: Well, I said Beaucatcher, I can't think what...what they call that, Barbara?

Beaucatcher Mountain?

Barbara: Beaucatcher Mountain?

SF: Yeah.

GG: All of that?

Barbara: Yeah, Beaucatcher Heights.

GG: Yeah, Beaucatcher Heights.

OM: From Forest Hill.

GG: From Forest Hill over to the church and back up to Windswept Drive.

SF: But what happened to it after he--did his kids sell it off, or did he sell it off?

GG: Yeah, he probably, or in fact Doctor Neeland bought it. Doctor Neeland is the one that bought it after it laid there empty for so long.

SF: So, did everybody that lived in the South Asheville community live on Dr. Dunn's land?

GG: No, no, no, no.

SF: Just your family?

GG: Just my family. Yeah, just my family. Of course, he gave many lots there to people that lived in that area, because he said he didn't need it. He gave it to Burgess, Scott, McClains, one more...I can't think of it right now.

SF: It's okay.

GG: But he gave them a place to build their house, and charged them nothing for it.

SF: So, did he give your family the land here, too?

GG: No, after the house burned, that is when we moved to where my Daddy bought a house in Haw Creek.

SF: Oh.

GG: And that's when we stayed there, because I mean, he was dead and his sons had moved away to South America. I don't know where they were living. But we never did hear more from them. Because I had written to the younger one, Tom, in later years and

asked could I buy that spot over there, which I never heard from, but he did send me a money order for a certain amount of dollars. The next thing I heard, Dr. Neeland had bought the whole thing.

SF: Hm. So, when did you move back after you lived in Haw Creek?

GG: In Haw Creek, after I finished high school from Haw Creek, that is when I got married. I got married in 1950, and I moved--I stayed with my mother-in-law for about three months, then we moved next to her house on...

OM: Green.

GG: No, first moved on--right there, across from where the Sanders lived.

OM: Congress?

GG: Huh? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Off of Commerce, yeah.

OM: Congress.

GG: Yeah, Congress. Yeah, Congress. I think I went for about six years, as far as I remember. And then I heard this place was up for sale, and that's when I contacted the owners there, because they all moved, it was just vacant then. Because all my kids was born, well, I think four of my kids was born () the house next to it, that's why they're still there () that's where they all lived. And then in '78--is that when you graduated?

OM: I graduated college in '72.

GG: Okay, '78 is when I--when Olivia was getting married Louise and I always wanted to have our own place, so we started building over here. And when Olivia and Ritchie got married, they hadn't decided where they wanted to live and whatnot, so they lived there.

SF: Is that next door?

GG: Number 12.

SF: Yeah.

GG: Until they decided to build on their own plot of land where they live now.

SF: So, what did you do to support your family? What kind of jobs did you have?

GG: I worked so many jobs you can't name them.

[all laugh]

SF: Well, just give us an idea.

GG: I did construction work, and it don't get cold now. At that time when it snowed, it might snow for two or three days. But at that time, I worked construction jobs, and when it got where I couldn't work, then I started working at Chesterfield Mill. I worked at Chesterfield Mill. Plus, at that time, I was still working for Dr. Budworth, the Wadopians, and Dr. Hanes up on Winthrop Drive. Before I went to work.

SF: What'd you do for them?

GG: Vacuum, wash windows, cut grass, rake leaves.

SF: Like a handyman?

GG: Yeah.

SF: And, so, when you started to get interested in the cemetery, what were you doing?

GG: That's when I went from Colonial Baking Company, and I worked there for 10, 15 years. That's when they closed and decided that they were going to--they just had built a new plant in Atlanta--in Tennessee--which is Rainbow. You ever seen a Rainbow loaf of bread? The color rainbow, or different colors?

OM: They don't have it now.

GG: They don't have it? Colonial was the same thing, so when I left--when the bakery closed, I had accumulated () \$5,000. But the only way I could get it was--don't get a job. Just go every Friday and pick up a check. So, I started thinking about retirement, back when I was still working on Beaucatcher Mountain. So Dr. Budworth, he used to be a doctor for the Red Cross, checked to see where you able to give blood or not. So, he asked me one Monday, had I found anything. I said no... he said, we have an opening at the Red Cross ... go put an application in. I went after I got off from his house, I went and put an application in at the American Red Cross. I think it was on Wednesday or Thursday when we were having an interview. And it was several guys there that I knew. And when they had the interview he'd tell them, check back, but when he got to me and took my application, he said "you mean you worked for a job 10, 15 years and quit?" and I had to tell him the whole story, the whole story. I could not leave and move to Atlanta, pay rent there, pay food and send money on to my kids, and they would be safe, so I decided not to do it. So, that's how I got a job at Red Cross and I worked there until I retired.

SF: So, what kind of work did you do at the Red Cross?

GG: I was the head custodian.

SF: Uh-huh.

GG: And then when I retired there in '85--'84, then after a while they asked me to come back. I said no, I had enough of that. So that's when I decided--I don't know why, I didn't count the costs, but I remembered how the cemetery was, because I was born, I say *in* church, because of where my mom was when I was born, so that's where I still am. So, I decided, I came out there with a pair of hedge clippers, and a sling, and a pair of loppers, and I would clean up the place as far--I'd say far as my front yard. When it would rain and whatnot, you couldn't work, you go back and it grew fast, just, worked and it just grew faster. So, one day I was down there working and George Taylor, he came by--he worked for Lowes. He came by because he was a trustee at the church. He came by and said yeah, we can get that done. So, we'd start, and seeing that the more we worked, the faster that thing would grow. It was in shambles. I said you could--you ever seen curtains hang up and you just look through something that way and see things in a different way. That's the way it was. Vines and whatnot, trees everywhere. And after a while, God worked things out. We was able to get the older neighbors from the Kenilworth area, they began to work. They began to seek out information. And for two years we had the youth of the Americorps, and they would stay a week and they would clean and whatnot, but still wasn't enough. That was back in '84, '85. After a while, when the Americorps left, that's when I met David Quinn, David Moore, Ellen Pearson and all of them, so they're working now, but it's still not finished. [laughs]

SF: Well, nature. Nature. So, what are some of your favorite memories from growing up?

GG: Well, my greatest memories, I -- maybe always thought about the dead, I don't know. Lot of things I thought about, but that's what I remember, how they was buried and how deep. And I often wonder, how would they get out there on Judgment Day? I had to learn

that later, they're not there anymore. Their life has gone on. But we would go out there, we would--I knew every stone in that cemetery. You can ask me now, if you give me a name, I can tell you just about where the grave is. I just helped my brother-in-law dig graves out there. And that was one of my greatest memories, was that they would have a fine resting place, only to learn now that it was just a place of resting, not dust.

SF: What do you think, what are the biggest changes that you've seen that you think are good changes?

GG: Cemetery-wise?

SF: No, just in Asheville.

GG: Well...

SF: ...from what you remember...

GG: ...I just know Kenilworth and South Asheville, 'cause I said that everybody is good people, but...by living here in Kenilworth, I knew more about us than I did other areas. And of course, it was in 1940 when the school was integrated.

OM: '62.

GG: Okay. I had two kids from the second and third grade, Kathy and my son Larry. They were integrated to Newton School. And there was most everybody that I had had to sign up for that. And only three families really went there, because when you heard about how they was doing up north, they throwing rocks, and they spitting on kids, doing whatnot, they didn't want that for their kids. But I rest assured, that they made it from Newton School to Forest Hill, there wouldn't be no fighting, because they was all parents. Mrs.

Sloan she was a teacher, so she--not gonna be no fighting... if they caught you fighting and whatnot, they would give you a good talk and then call your parents. They was neighbors.

SF: Why do you think that the South Asheville community is so often forgotten? You know, when people talk about the African American communities of Asheville they talk about Southside, and Eagle Street, and East End. Why aren't they talking about South Asheville?

GG: I think it's because of when Mr. embalmer Jessie Ray and a coworker funeral home, they passed the word out that that cemetery had been condemned. Because they had gotten their cemeteries, and they could make more for their graves than the McDowells charged in South Asheville, because the McDowells gave the cemetery to George Avery for the Methodist Church. The other part was for a public that didn't have any way to be buried, was gonna send back home, what we used to call it. So, that's why it was that way. But I knew every grave out there...

SF: But besides the cemetery, as an African American community, why is this community so overlooked that people don't talk about it like they do Southside or Eagle Street or the Block?

GG: Because, as I said, the funeral home said the cemetery had been condemned, so South Asheville just kicked out--in the boondocks. So that's why...

OM: Don't you think that maybe South Asheville, it just blended--the Black community blended so well--was always such a part of this whole community--Kenilworth area, that there was no trouble, that you never heard anything, there was no big ruckus. There

wasn't, and not calling out any community, but say Southside, they had a lot of clubs, and night spots, and you know, just had more people in. There was more commotion, more going--more of the Black community together. In this area, there were not as many Black people, Black families...

SF: But there were stores, there were... a school.

OM: Yeah, there were stores, a school, and this community--the South Asheville community--had the school, the churches, they had a Masonic lodge. They had a little club down here at the end of the--The Orchard, you call it. And all that was in the area of the cemetery. There were stores on Wyoming Road, there was a store on Kenilworth Road.

GG: Dawson Street.

OM: Yes, Dawson Street.

GG: And then Joe Lance stayed on Thurland.

OM: On Thurland.

GG: Right.

OM: But I guess things to me, my eyesight on it, is just the Black community here was just blended in. It was just one community, the... it wasn't as heavily Black people--family--populated.

SF: But how much did you interact with the white community?

OM: This community? Kenilworth Community?

SF: Yeah, South Asheville.

OM: The Black families here did interact with them.

SF: Did you go to somebody's house--a white person's house?

GG: Oh, yeah.

OM: Oh, yeah.

GG: They've been to my mama's house, because if when the kids came to play--if they was at your place you got a piece of pie, or milk or cookies or whatnot, we got the same thing, they got the same thing in this area. That's why I'm so glad that I live here.

[laughter]

GG: They were no different.

OM: At the time that my siblings all went to--when they started at Newton School, I was at Hill Street School, so that meant when I--in the eighth grade, I had to go to David Millard. So, I went to David Millard and to Lee Edwards. And I had white friends, and they would come home with us, and we did sports together--I've been to their houses, little cookouts, picnics with their families. And the same when they came here. The little area next to this house here now, where they're building those two little houses...

SF: The ones down the hill?

OM: Yeah, down the hill, if you can believe it. We used to play all in that area. That was just open field. We used to play kickball, jump rope, one-two-three red light, I mean, just anything kids play we played in that area, as well as down at the Kenilworth Park area that we used to call The Flat. And the white kids would come play, and wherever the crowd gathered, that's where the most people--you know, that's where we played. So, it moved

around quite a bit. And then again, too, back then there were a lot of orchards around here. This whole--where this house is, it was a cherry orchard. Pear trees, grapevines, plum trees... had strawberries.

SF: So, who took care of all that? Whose...

OM: Mostly him [all laugh]. Mostly him. But everybody came to take in of the goodies. So, yeah, we had...and there were times, they would come up and Dad and Mom would, you know, go get watermelons or fix hot dogs or something. You know, it was just a community effort, and it was Black and white.

GG: I couldn't tell the difference. Now I know, just like kids, we would fight and whatnot. You take your quarrels(?) home, tomorrow you'd be back. That's what it was.

[laughter]

GG: That's what it was. And of course, as I say, I'd tell everybody, I have five--no, six, biological kids--I have a hundred and more kids, because they call me now, "Granddaddy, do you remember, we used to be in your pear tree... your tomatoes and your cucumbers and milking your cows and getting eggs." They'd call me right now. I've got a hundred...

OM: He used to teach the kids around here how to milk a cow. We all could milk a cow.

SF: How many cows did you have?

GG: We just had one.

SF: Oh. Yeah.

OM: ...at one time we had two.

GG: Oh, well, but a calf.

[laughter]

SF: What about chickens and...

GG: Oh, yeah. I remember when at first, I used to buy a hundred baby chickens at a time, and I'd raise those and when they got frying sized, we'd have a chicken killing. That's why all my kids, they can cut chicken, put up chicken, putting up--put 'em in the freezer, yes, sir. And they would be right there with you.

OM: And like with my grandmother, with her, she was the best cakemaker. Pound cakes, any kind of cake, pie, cobblers. And she used to sell a lot of those, so... baking, and then she would dry fruit. We would pick the apples, we would sit and have her peel the apples, she'd put them on clean dish towels, put them on the hedges, they'd dry out, and she would put them up into the fry pies in the wintertime and that kind of thing. She did canning--I have canned so much stuff--but she did all that, she had a little root cellar under her house. And that's just amazing, I just wish my grandkids could see something like that or know of something like that. Because it's really a different lifestyle.

SF: Yeah, that's the problem, it's lost.

OM: Mm-hmm.

GG: And then we had an insurance man that would come by, and if Mom was fixing fried pie, he wasn't gonna leave until he got some fried apple pie. If he smelled that, "I ain't going 'til I get me a fried pie," and they had something in them, they're not like pies now.

They put a full spoon of dough in a whole cake of dough, they had filling in them. But I've got a hundred and more kids and they still recognize me.

SF: Well, they're all grown up now, I guess.

GG: And they remember. And they don't forget. Birthdays, holidays and whatnot, they're gonna call me. I had one come up... who was it that come by the other day?

OM: Was it David?

GG: No, Felicia's brother.

OM: It's a Biblical name.

SF: That narrows it down.

[laughter]

OM: It starts with a M.

GG: But anyway, they would come and stay with us during the summer. And now I can't remember (). I thank God for good memory.

SF: You have an amazing memory, I have to say. How many of the original families from the Southside still live here? Or people from those families.

OM: From South Asheville?

GG: Southside.

OM: Southside?

GG: I went to school with all of them, but most all that came with me is already gone. All the kids that came from that Catholic school there on Walton Street, and then that area of Hill Street.

SF: Oh, St...

GG: Most of them are dead.

OM: St. Anthony's.

SF: St. Anthony's.

GG: Yeah, yeah.

SF: Yeah, Al Whitesides went to St. Anthony's. So, you don't think that there's any older people left that are from South Asheville?

OM: South Asheville...

SF: Well, from this neighborhood, let's call it.

OM: I think he's the oldest...

SF: Well, the oldest, but...

OM: The only one left that I can think of. Ms. Bergen? People on that...they're all...

SF: Is there an older lady down there that lives across the street that lives across the street from the lady that owns most of the land down there?

GG: Teresa?

OM: Teresa Muckelvene? No, she younger. She's just maybe a couple years older than me.

SF: Oh.

OM: She moved there...

GG: ...when she married....

OM: ...when she married to that....

GG: ...one Muckelvene, yeah. Leon Muckelvene.

SF: So...where were the stores--were there stores up the mountain? Was this connected to the top of Beaucatcher?

GG: No, no, no, no.

SF: No.

GG: Right there where the senior citizen building there on Glenwood Road.

SF: Mm-hm.

OM: Harvest House.

SF: Oh, Harvest House.

GG: Yeah, Harvest House. Okay, that was a store.

SF: Oh.

GG: It was on Dawson Street, around the corner of Dawson and Wynn Street. That was Dalton store.

SF: So, when you're talking about these stores, did Black and white people go there or were they just...

GG: Yup.

SF: ...you know, who were the owners of them? Were they people from this community or were they white people?

GG: They all came because, if the kid wanted something, they had ice cream, or all day sucker, or peanut bars or Mr. Goodbar, they bought 'em.

SF: But who owned the stores?

GG: Joe Lance owned the one there on Thurland.

SF: Like, were they African American?

GG: Yeah. And then Sherman Withers owned one right there on Wyoming Road.

OM: Right across from the tennis court. It's a house now.

GG: Sherman Withers, and then...

SF: So, there isn't much left that you could see of the neighborhood?

OM: It's changed.

GG: No, because there's only one building... no, it's no building left. They're all down, all those stores and whatnot.

OM: No, there's not () in this community.

SF: Would you say the house next door is the oldest, maybe?

GG: Yeah.

OM: The oldest, absolutely. Only one standing and...

SF: ...So, when is that one from?

OM: ...St. John A Baptist Church is still standing.

SF: The other church, St. Mark's?

OM: St. Mark, you know, is right down the hill, and they turned that into a house. It's right next to that little tiny house.

SF: So basically, it's just your memory that's left?

GG: Mostly. There's no elderly person that lived in this community now, that's still living. I'm the only one left standing.

[laughter]

OM: And the last of the siblings.

GG: That's right.

SF: So, what would you say if somebody said, "how'd it feel to grow up in South Asheville?" and, you know, what would you tell people about this neighborhood?

GG: Tell 'em, "you should've been there."

[Laughter]

SF: Okay, well, do you have any last thoughts that you'd want to share with people?

GG: I'm just hoping everybody can learn to live and be neighborly like they supposed--
like God had planned for them to do.

SF: Okay. Okay, great, well, thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW.